

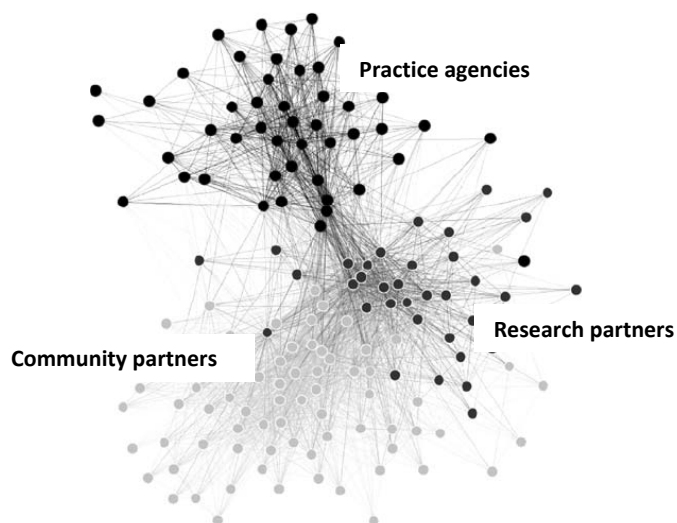
INITIAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH PBRN INITIATIVE

Draft February 6, 2009

I. Purpose

Initial research and evaluation activities of the Public Health PBRN Initiative are intended to provide a descriptive characterization of networks during their early stages of development. This descriptive 'network analysis' will provide a baseline for tracking changes in network structure and function over time. The information generated through these activities is intended to be useful for a variety of audiences, including current grantees and others interested in developing or expanding public health PBRNs, as well as policy and practice stakeholders interested in using the evidence and insight to be produced through PBRNs. Specifically, initial research and evaluation activities of the Public Health PBRN Initiative are intended to:

1. Describe the initial structure of public health PBRNs in terms of their organizational participants, roles, and patterns of interaction.
2. Describe past history of involvement in research collaboration among PBRN participants.
3. Describe motivations and expectations for participation in PBRNs among participants.
4. Describe the initial research interests held individually and collectively by PBRN participants.
5. Describe the human and material resources that PBRNs secure to support their activities.



Illustrative example of patterns of interaction within a network
(Adapted from Merrill et al. 2008)

II. Short-term Research Questions of Interest (1-3 year time horizon)

1. What types of public health organizations participate in PBRNs? How does this vary across networks and change over time?
2. What motivates organizations to participate in PBRNs? What are the expected benefits and expected costs? How does this vary across networks, within networks, and over time?
3. How much past experience do PBRN participants have with public health research? How much past experience do PBRN participants have in collaborating with other network members? How does this experience vary within networks, across networks, and over time?
4. How are roles and responsibilities divided and determined among PBRN participants? How are key decisions reached within networks? How do these processes vary across networks and over time?
5. What types of research interests do PBRNs identify and prioritize? How do these interests vary within and across networks and over time?
6. What types of human, financial, and organizational resources do PBRNs tap to support their activities? How do these resources vary across networks and over time?
7. What are the types and intensities of interaction among PBRN participants? How do these attributes vary across networks, within networks, and over time?

III. Longer-term Research Questions (3-5 year time horizon)

1. How successful are PBRNs in designing and implementing public health studies within their networks? What are the numbers and types of studies proposed, funded, and completed?
2. How successful are PBRNs in engaging public health practice agencies in the research projects that have been implemented? What types and levels of engagement have been achieved?
3. What are the internal and external factors that most heavily influence the operation of PBRNs, in terms of their ability to design and implement studies? In terms of their ability to engage practice agencies in the design and conduct of these studies?
4. How successful are PBRNs in disseminating and translating research findings into practice? What are the internal and external factors that most heavily influence PBRN translational activities?
5. To what extent are practitioner and research expectations for PBRNs met during the first several years of implementation? What are the internal and external factors that most heavily influence the degree to which expectations are met?
6. What unintended/unexpected consequences are realized through PBRNs during the first several years of implementation?
7. Which types of PBRN structures and processes appear to work best in which contexts? Network characteristics of interest include the number and types of organizational participants, division of roles and responsibilities, decision-making structures, human and material resources, and patterns of interaction within networks. What models work best in low-resource vs. high-resource settings?

IV. Initial Information Sources and Research Activities

(to be developed/finalized in collaboration with PBRN grantees)

- PBRN grantee proposals
- PBRN grantee annual and final reports
- Brief, periodic surveys of PBRN network directors/managers to track needs, activities, accomplishments
- Baseline electronic survey of PBRN network participants (within 6 months of start-up)
- Follow-up electronic survey of PBRN network participants (after 18 months of start-up)
- In-depth interviews with network developers/managers at end of initial 2-year grants